

THE AMBER ADVOCATE

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Your story ideas and pictures are welcome.

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PROFILE: JIM WALTERS

THE NEW DIRECTOR OVER THE U.S. AMBER ALERT PROGRAM ISN'T EXACTLY NEW



Jim Walters, Fran Keith, Bill Bryan & Lisa Schmid

When James “Jim” Walters took over as the program administrator for the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program in July 2014, he wasn’t exactly the new kid on the block. For the past 10 years he had been working with the program by overseeing the AMBER Alert in Indian Country and 6 of those years he also headed the Southern Border Initiative, a program that has been working to coordinate child abduction recovery efforts in Mexico and border states in the U.S.

Walters grew up in rural east Texas and Oklahoma and decided to join the military instead of working on a farm or in the oil fields. He spent more than 35 years in law enforcement and the military including working as a military police officer in Alaska, patrol officer in southern California and command positions in northern California and Texas.

Since Walters once again lives in Texas, wearing two hats just isn’t enough. Here are a few more caps he’s still wearing:

- Program Administrator for the National Criminal Justice Training Center.
- Founder of a non-profit group to assist developing counties and rural U.S. areas develop safe havens for abused, exploited and trafficked women and children.
- Founder of another non-profit organization that supports other non-profit organizations to develop security and protective services for free.

Despite all of his experience, Walters said it was a challenge to take over the U.S. Department of Justice AMBER Alert Program that had been overseen during its first 10 years by Phil Keith. “I was very fortunate to follow Phil in this role,” said Walters. “Not only had he developed the program, he acted as a mentor to me and others. The most important thing we learned from him was, ‘It’s about the children.’ All of the things we do are about protecting children.”

Walters said the best part of the program is the staff and consultants with first-hand experience who provide training. The program

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PROFILE: JIM WALTERS

“JIM” WALTERS HOPES TO KEEP THE AMBER ALERT MOMENTUM MOVING

Continued from page 3



also relies on more than 100 law enforcement training academies and the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) for research and training.

Funding for training continues to be an ongoing problem for federal, state and local agencies. “Our challenge is to utilize the resources we have and work with them to make sure that all communities, no matter the size, status or makeup, have the ability to obtain the best training and technical assistance possible,” Walters added.

Reductions in funding mean the trainers are now going to law enforcement academies instead of flying all their officers to where the trainers are located. Other cost-saving measures include “train the trainer” programs and providing more online training.

“We also want to focus on some of the underserved communities, improving capabilities and recovery rates in minority and rural communities,” said Walters. “We are going to stick with the things that have made such an impact in the past.”

“I remembered this officer who told me how the training really helped when an AMBER Alert was issued. I believe drawing on the right resources and improving the speed and efficiency of their response can make the difference between the safe recovery of

children or losing them.”

One area that will be expanded is training for a Child Abduction Response Team or CART. “CART is one of the greatest tools in the fight to save abducted children,” said Walters. “I wish more communities had them. They really make a difference in tribal, rural and minority communities where resources are scarce.”

Walters also plans to make sure two of the programs he has been personally involved in remain strong.

AMBER Alert in Indian Country:

“Anyone who knows me is aware that Indian Country is where my heart is,” said Walters. “Not only from living and working in tribal communities, but because of the commitment these communities have to protect their children. The AMBER Alert in Indian Country project is one of the most gratifying projects I have ever worked on.”

Southern Border Initiative:

“I was recently at a meeting with officials from Mexico and we realized more than half of those initial participants in the initiative were no longer alive. They had died in the line of duty. We seldom think about the huge risk and the courage required of our brothers and sisters across the border. It is an honor to work with them.”

In the end, Walters said family members of missing and abducted children have had the most profound impact on him and motivates him to keep working hard. “Having a family member of a missing child come up to me and thank me for the work we do. That is what it is all about.” ☺

FAMILY ROUNDTABLE

FAMILY MEMBERS OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS GATHER TO IDENTIFY BEST PRACTICES FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

Thirty survivors of losing a family member to homicide gathered in Nashville, Tennessee, to share their experiences with the hope of offering guidance on how law enforcement officers, prosecutors and others can help other families facing a similar tragedy. The Family Roundtable was sponsored by the Knoxville, Tennessee, Police Department and the Tennessee Association of Chiefs of Police. The family members met April 18-19, 2015, and came up with specific recommendations for different professions, including the following:

Law Enforcement:

- Agencies should have policies and training on how to notify survivors.
- Law enforcement officials should not use murder cases for political or personal benefit.
- Investigators should inform family members in a sensitive way what is needed for collecting evidence and how long the evidence may be retained.
- Investigators should keep family members informed about any updates in the case once they have been cleared.

Prosecutors:

- Prosecutors should have policies and practices to help survivors know what to expect during the prosecution and appeals.
- Have a policy that preserves the right to make victim impact statements.
- Prosecutors must meet with survivors to discuss sentencing decisions or plea bargains.

Courts:

- Statutes are needed to ensure victim impact statements are allowed.

Victim Advocates:

- Victim advocates should offer services immediately.
- Notifications should be timely and not just consist of a phone call before a trial date.
- Advocates should have adequate training and be knowledgeable about the law, the specific case, after care services, victim compensation benefits and dealing with the media.

Probation and Parole:

- Survivors should be notified about conditions of probation, parole and any hearings.
- Restrictions should be placed to prevent convicted murderers from contacting the family.

Media:

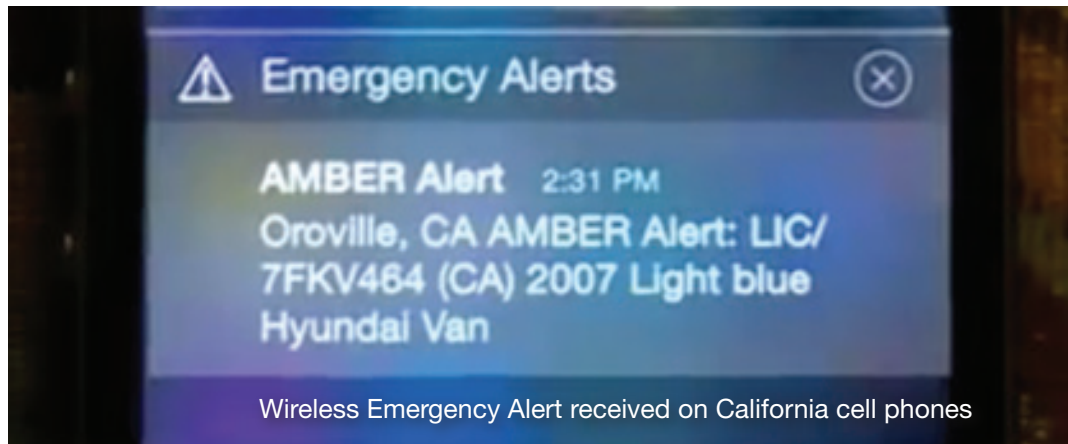
- Use victim advocacy groups to approach editorial boards and reporters about how to prevent further harm to the survivors during news coverage.
- Provide formal briefings and develop educational materials to help families deal with the media. ☺

ON THE FRONT LINES:

AMBER ALERT ON CELL PHONE LEADS TO SAFE RECOVERY WITHIN MINUTES



Sergeant Jason Hail



Wireless Emergency Alert received on California cell phones

The Butte County Sheriff's Office in California issued an AMBER Alert for 3 children on June 14, 2014. Nine minutes later the children were recovered safely and the suspect was in custody. A citizen saw the Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) on his cell phone and looked up and saw the suspect's blue van.

"I can't believe right when the AMBER Alert came is right when I see the van. That was right within 5 seconds," Gurinder Jhutti told a reporter. "My gut told me 'Let's go back and check it out.' That's when I came back and I looked at the license plate and that's when I started calling 911 and I saw 3 kids in the back. That's when I started following him."

Matthew Kline allegedly took his 3-year-old daughter, 18-month-old son and an unrelated 4-year-old girl earlier in the morning. The AMBER Alert cautioned citizens to not approach the suspect because authorities believed he was carrying firearms.

Sergeant Jason Hail has spent 19 years with the Butte County Sheriff's Office and this was the first AMBER Alert for him and the agency. The sheriff's office immediately set up a

command post and a call center. Officers had an idea where the suspect was heading but did not know at the time the alert would go to all the cell phones in the area.

"I was very surprised and relieved how quickly it was resolved," said Hail. "I was impressed and it renewed my faith by showing that people really do care and will take appropriate action."

He also credits the AMBER Alert training he had received in the past for the positive outcome. "I learned that in order to have a smooth operation, it would be beneficial to have all of the involved parties' information and the circumstances written down, including officer safety information and if there is an arrest warrant active or in the process," added Hail. "We were flooded with calls in our dispatch center. I learned we need to have a sufficient amount of people on duty to handle calls from the public and assign tasks to individuals to handle the media, make contact with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and other logistics."

California Highway Patrol Captain Jay Bart has been California's AMBER Alert Coordinator for the past 2 years. He said it was an easy decision to realize this case was eligible for an AMBER Alert. "The children were in imminent danger because the suspect was violent and mentally unstable," said Bart. "He was also in possession of stolen firearms and had made threats toward the children and their mother."

The highway patrol uses a step-by-step process to initiate a chain of notifications to try and recover children during an AMBER Alert, including:

- The Emergency Alert System was activated.
- Changeable Message Signs were activated to display the suspect vehicle's information on the national and state highway systems.
- The suspect vehicle's information was entered into the California Highway Patrol License Plate Reader database.
- The California Lottery was contacted to display the AMBER Alert information on their display systems.
- A message was posted to the California Office of Emergency Services' Emergency Digital Information System website and it was also sent to all law enforcement agencies in California, including off-duty highway patrol officers.
- NCMEC was contacted to request the WEA activation and other secondary notifications.
- A flyer with information and pictures was sent to law enforcement, first responders, medical facilities, media outlets and missing persons' organizations.

"I firmly believe our protocols aided in the success of this AMBER Alert. We are all aware time is a critical factor in cases where missing

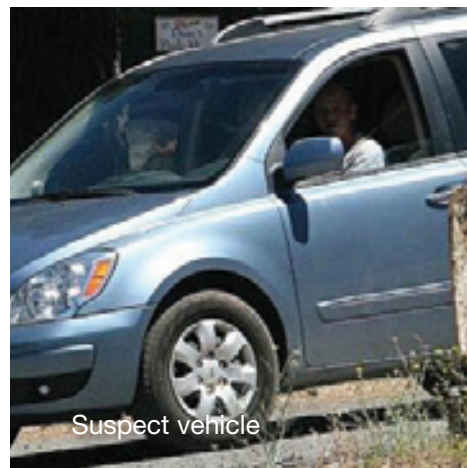
and abducted children are involved," said Bart. "I was ecstatic to learn the suspect was apprehended in a very short time frame."

NCMEC believes this AMBER Alert had the fastest resolution of any alert involving WEA. "This case really shows what a game changer it is to have AMBER Alerts come directly to cell phones in the targeted area," said Robert Hoever, NCMEC's Director of Special Programs in the Missing Children Division. "Nearly everyone is carrying a phone and we just need one person to be in the right place at the right time."

Hail has this advice for those who have yet to issue an AMBER Alert: "I believe the most important part is to have enough staff in place to handle calls from the public," he said. "Have individuals in place and assign those individuals responsibilities as you would with any other critical incident."

Preparation, protocols and new technology made this AMBER Alert a case study on what works to recover abducted children.

"Factoring in the time it takes to gather information, approve the alert and activate the emergency alert system, the suspect was arrested and the victims were safely recovered in less than one hour from the activation," concluded Bart. 🌟



Suspect vehicle



California Highway Patrol Captain & California AMBER Alert Coordinator Jay Bart

AMBER ALERT IN INDIAN COUNTRY

ONLINE TRAINING AVAILABLE ABOUT CHILD ABDUCTION CASES IN INDIAN COUNTRY



The AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program has partnered with the Missing and Exploited Children's Program to host webinars on missing and abducted child cases and human trafficking.

For more than a year this online series has provided state, local and tribal subject matter experts to identify common types of violence, risk factors for violence and signs of possible victimization among children, including those in tribal country. Presenters also include trafficking survivors and victim advocates who share their stories and perspectives on developing victim-centric responses in an effort to more effectively serve and support child victims.

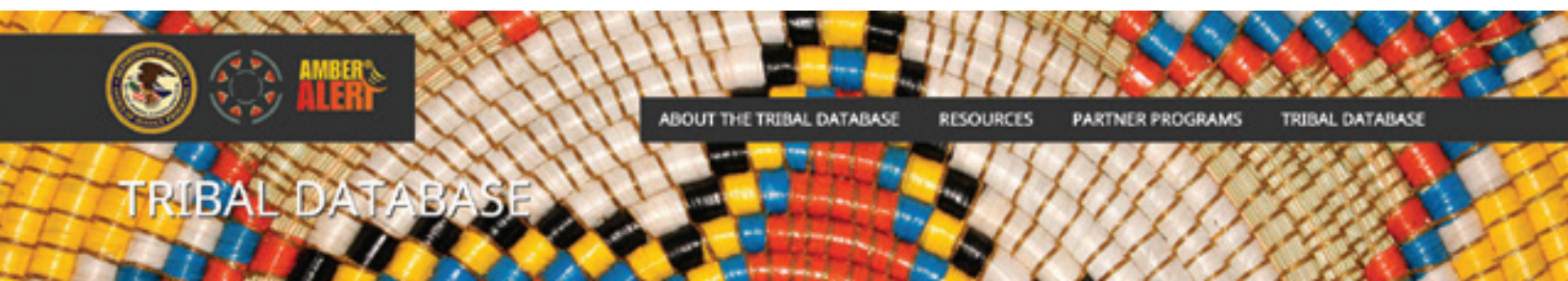
Topics have included human trafficking in Indian Country, the intersections between drugs and human trafficking and the AMBER Alert program. Past webinar recordings can be found at <http://mecptraining.org/tribaltraffickingseries/>.

AMBER ALERT WELCOMES TRIBAL PARTNERS TO VISIT AND JOIN THE NEW TRIBAL DATABASE

The AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program invites tribal leaders and professionals to visit a new website www.tribaldatabase.org which features information and resources important to the work of tribal communities in the areas of child protection, human trafficking and other aspects of law enforcement, public safety and social services. The tribal database website also offers direct access to the Tribal Database System designed for use by all Federally-recognized tribes.

With guest access to the database, users can view an online contact directory that displays and allows search of organization-level contact information. With member-level access, tribal users can log in securely to view, search for and contribute to their individual user contact information, data on tribal training and technical assistance needs, tribal publications and resources, and other important documents members wish to post for reference and informational use by other authorized users affiliated with their organizations. Content stored in the database supports users' ability to build and maintain continuity and accuracy of tribal information and records over time.

For more information, visit www.tribaldatabase.org.



AMBER ALERT INTERNATIONAL

JAMAICA BOOSTS EFFORTS TO RECOVER ABDUCTED CHILDREN

The island country of Jamaica held an international conference to coordinate efforts between countries to recover missing and abducted children. The conference was held May 2015 during Missing Children Awareness Week.

Jamaica has a child abduction alert called the “Ananda Alert” and has increased efforts to work with countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to make sure missing and abducted children return home safely.

Katia Dantas, Policy Director for the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children in Latin America and Caribbean, was the keynote speaker at the event which was organized by “Hear the Children’s Cry.” The event included a meeting with key stakeholders, a press conference and additional media interviews.

The meetings also included information about good international practices and technical assistance that can be used with the Ananda Alert System. Participants included representatives from the Office of Children’s Registry, law enforcement agencies, Child Development Agency, Ministry of Education, Sandals Foundation, National Parenting Support Commission, National Association of Social Workers and other organizations.

In November 2015, the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children welcomed Hear the Children’s Cry to the Global Missing Children Network as its newest member and the first Caribbean country. ☺

BELGIUM HOSTS CONFERENCE ON MISSING CHILDREN AND ADULTS

A conference in Brussels, Belgium, provided new and upcoming research on missing children and adults. The Second International Academic Conference on Missing Adults and Children took place in July 2015.

The topics included: The challenges of international cross border investigations; why some missing children receive extensive media attention while others are forgotten; gang involvement with missing young people; runaway children from alternative care in Finland; and the intricacies of mediation during parental abductions.

The conference also included a session on the “Psychological Consequences of Missing a Loved one: Theory, Coping and Treatment,” which discussed the health and psychological impact a missing person has on a person left behind.

The conference was hosted by the University of Portsmouth, Missing Children Europe and University of Brussels. ☺



LETTERS TO THE ADVOCATE

Dear AMBER Advocate,

I just wanted to follow up with you regarding the training you did for us here in Hawaii. One of the judges who attended said he was sitting in court the following week of your training and although it was not a trafficking case, because of the training he attended, red flags popped up in his head and said it sounded like trafficking. This judge was a Honolulu prosecutor before but I am glad he was able to put two and two together. Hopefully, the training will make a difference with the other judges too.

Charlene Takeno

Executive Director at Missing Child Center, Hawaii

Dear AMBER Advocate,

Thank you for sending us such a fantastic training and a fantastic group of trainers this week. I was very impressed with the content of the training and the vast knowledge, presentations, and professionalism of the trainers. I will surely want to follow up with more trainings with the AMBER Alert and Fox Valley in the future.

Randy Corban

*U.S. Department of Justice Law Enforcement Coordinator
Oxford, Mississippi*

FLORIDA HONORS VETERAN AMBER ALERT LEADER AND YOUNG GIRL ON MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY

A 10-year-old girl who was abducted by a registered sex offender after he murdered her mother was honored for her heroism on Missing Children's Day. Florida Governor Rick Scott praised the girl for her ability to convince the suspect to let her go.

"I actually tried to escape twice," the girl told the audience. "Yeah, I was like, 'Where is your wife and kids?' I was just talking to him, that's all I did and then he let me go."

The suspect was arrested eight hours after a massive manhunt.

Governor Scott also honored former AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program Director Phil Keith by presenting him with the John and Revé Walsh Award. "During his career, Mr. Keith provided national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to endangered missing, abducted and exploited children," said Governor Scott. "Under his guidance, Florida's law enforcement community has benefited from a variety of training and technical assistance." ☺

ODDS & ENDS

INSPIRATION FOR THE AMBER ALERT NEARS 20 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

When 9-year-old Amber Hagerman went missing in Arlington, Texas, on January 13, 1996, the entire community joined together to bring her home. Although her story ended in tragedy, it inspired Diana Simone to contact a local radio station about broadcasting alerts on radio and TV when a child is abducted. On January 27, 1996, Simone put her thoughts into writing and that letter became the inspiration for the AMBER Alert.

As we near the 20th anniversary of that letter, the AMBER Alert program has spread around the world. In the U.S., nearly 800 children have been safely recovered after an AMBER Alert was issued. Instead of taking credit for the program, Simone asked that the alert be named after Amber Hagerman. ☺



EDUCATOR NAMED NEW AMBER ALERT PROGRAM MANAGER

Kelly Hudson has been named a program manager for the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance Program. She is responsible for the administrative, logistical and financial management of the program.

Hudson has more than 10 years of experience in developing and delivering adult learning and public safety courses at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. She was also the primary liaison to the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association. ☺



CHAMPION OF SUZANNE'S LAW PASSES AWAY

Doug Lyall, a member of the Surviving Parents Coalition and Family Roundtable, passed away in August. He and his wife Mary worked tirelessly in search of their daughter Suzanne after she disappeared on March 2, 1998. The Lyalls helped pass several pieces of legislation including Suzanne's Law, which requires the police to notify the National Crime Information Center when someone between 18 and 21 is reported missing. They also established the Center for Hope to help other families with missing or abducted college students. ☺



NEW YORK STREAMLINES REQUESTS FOR MISSING PERSONS ALERTS

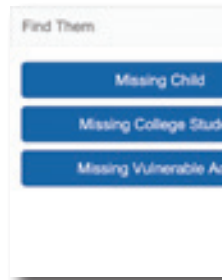
The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services is making it easier for law enforcement agencies to report missing person cases so alerts can go out within minutes instead of hours. At the request of a law enforcement agency, the Missing Persons Clearinghouse can now issue Missing Child, Missing College Student and Missing Vulnerable Adult Alerts. The new automated system provides a single point of entry to report missing person cases. ☺



ODDS & ENDS

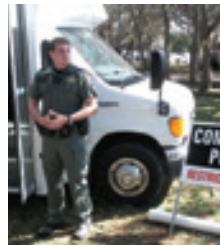
NEED TO FIND A MISSING PERSON? NEW YORK HAS AN APP FOR THAT

The New York State Missing Persons Clearinghouse has created Find Them, a mobile-friendly application to assist law enforcement officers in missing person cases. The app is designed for investigators and first responders and provides tips based on the conditions and circumstances of each case. The app can be used on any device connected to the internet and can be found at www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/missing/findthem/. ☺



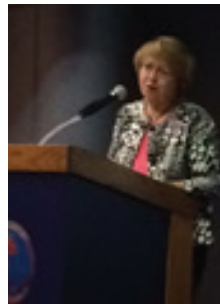
TEXAS TRAINS FOR RECOVERING AN ABDUCTED CHILD FOR MISSING CHILDREN'S DAY

The Southeast Child Abduction Response Team (CART) honored Missing Children's Day on June 26, 2015, by honing their skills to recover an abducted child. The Katy Police Department hosted the field training that involved 28 officers representing 10 different law enforcement agencies, and 26 others including representatives from the Texas Center for the Missing. ☺



FLORIDA HOSTS PILOT TRAINING COURSE ON LONG TERM MISSING CASES

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, AMBER Alert Training & Technical Assistance Program held a pilot course called "Advanced Cold Case Long Term Missing Investigations" on June 23-24, 2015. More than 100 people attended the class that is designed to improve investigative techniques and efforts on long term missing and cold case investigations. Participants learned from case studies, interactive case discussions and specific techniques to improve the skills of investigators assigned to long term missing cold cases. ☺



UBER DRIVERS NOW HELPING TO RESPOND TO AMBER ALERTS

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is now sending AMBER Alerts to the tens of thousands of drivers in the Uber car network. The drivers get timely, geo-targeted AMBER Alerts as text messages on their Uber app, www.uber.com/newsroom. Uber allows consumers with smartphones to submit a trip request which is then sent to Uber drivers who use their own cars. ☺



ONLINE MODULE NOW AVAILABLE ON CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING INVESTIGATIONS

A 1-hour online introductory module, "Child Sex Trafficking Investigations: Law Enforcement Response" (CST), is now available. The module introduces prospective registrants to the full course of topics covered during the 3-day child sex trafficking investigations on-site training. All individuals who are interested in enrolling for the onsite CST course are encouraged to first complete this online introductory module. Learn more about it here: www.ncjtc.org/AmberAlert/Courses/DistanceLearning/CSTOnlineIntroduction ☺